

Repercussions of National Socialism upon Foreign Countries

By ERNST WILHELM MEYER

RECENTLY the power of National Socialism has grown so tremendously that everybody should feel sorry for those who prophesied its early collapse. Those prophets number millions; they live in England and in France and in many other countries, perhaps also on the Western Hemisphere. They form the mighty army of the wishful thinkers. The destructive character of their activities can hardly be overemphasized. By constantly offering easy consolations amidst greatest dangers for mankind, they undermine every energy. Rather seldom are their utterances criticized. Most people like the jolly good fellow who is a never wavering optimist.

PHASES OF WISHPFUL THINKING

We remember, for instance, the discussions in which the inevitable financial breakdown of National Socialism was pointed out. They reached their climax when Schacht lost his position as head of the Reichsbank last year, long after he had lost all his influence anyhow. Highly important as the financial situation of National Socialism is, of course, its importance should not be exaggerated, because it will hardly exercise decisive influence upon the next few developments. The real question is not whether the National Socialist financial policy is such as to operate successfully for a decade or for decades to come, but whether it can be continued during the next few months and years, which are the years of decision. If these decisions are in favor of National Socialism, the financial problem will be a minor one. For the same reason, Neville Chamberlain was entirely

mistaken when he told his countrymen that they should not worry about the epoch-making changes which are going on in the Far East; Japan would have to ask England for a loan one day, and then everything would be settled all right again. Japan will never have to ask England for a loan of political importance, if her policy has successfully prevailed before.

The wishful thinkers are likewise dangerously wrong when from shortages of fat and butter, from bread and coffee lines in Germany, they draw the conclusion that National Socialism is rapidly exhausting its economic means. They forget that Hitler would have enough money available for all necessities of the daily life of the nation if he were not continuing armaments; other countries would gratefully even help him as he pleases. Moreover, since the conquest of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia, and since the economic domination of Hungary, Rumania, and Yugoslavia, an imminent economic breakdown of National Socialism has become even more improbable than before, in spite of all apparent economic difficulties.

About a year ago, one liked to speculate upon unrest and discontent within the German army. But when one and a half dozen generals offered Hitler their resignations for reasons of their conscience, they were replaced within less than twenty-four hours by other, perhaps a little less conscience minded, high ranking officers. Very seldom, indeed, do army revolts occur during a period of armament races. When a colonel can become a general at forty years of age, he usually feels quite happy.

Other political observers doubted—or still doubt—the stability of the Rome-Berlin axis. Their listeners are told that Mussolini cannot sleep well since Hitler moved his troops towards the Brenner. However, it would be better to realize that Mussolini's political power is deadly endangered the moment Hitler's position is weakened, and vice versa.

Others get satisfaction from drawing comparisons between the National Socialist regime and the French Revolution, in which the radicals finally met death or were otherwise eliminated. The same, they argue, will necessarily happen one day to National Socialist radicals. Yet they forget that—fortunately—the ideas of the French Revolution survived. Therefore, would it really be consoling if one day Hitler, Goering, and Goebbels were eliminated while their ideas survived? It seems better not to base any expectations upon the death of Hitler. In Russia, Stalinism followed Leninism; very probably in Germany, Goeringism would follow Hitlerism.

It is most unwelcome but necessary to deal also with the belief that by necessity the Christian churches will survive, as "built by the Lord Himself." Recently I spoke to a New York publisher who had just come back from Germany, and he told me that he had been amazed to notice how some church activities were still going on there. Of course, after almost two thousand years of existence, Christianity in Germany is still far from being uprooted because of a mere six years of National Socialist neo-paganism. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the churches need men for the fulfillment not only of their missionary work, but also of their other divine tasks. If the necessary number of men is no longer made available to the churches because gradually the whole nation is educated

under National Socialist leadership along un-Christian and anti-Christian lines, the consequences for the churches must be disastrous. Already one speaks within German Protestantism about going into the catacombs.

Neither can one say that by its superior philosophy and quality, democracy itself must inevitably survive. Democracy has not existed—except in Switzerland—for more than a hundred and fifty years. If the whole human history were written down into twenty volumes, hardly more than one volume would deal with democracy. The largest part of the other volumes would be full of the history of dictatorships and other undemocratic forms of government. Democracy is still—comparatively speaking—an experiment.

SOME DARK SPOTS

When instead of indulging in wishful thinking we examine the realities of the situation, we come to results which do not justify overconfidence.

First, we have to realize the important fact that not only a French but also a German "Magnet-Line" exists. As the German army can hardly cross the French border, so the French army is hardly in a position any more to cross the Rhine to lend more direct support to French allies in Central and Eastern Europe. And it should not be forgotten that eighty million Germans can be used by one command at any moment's time, without any criticism from any parliament, from any part of the press, or from any other sector of free public opinion. It cannot be doubted that in the democratic nations of Europe, on the other hand, there is plenty of political disunity, of confusion, and of ignorance of the character of the opposing so-called world philosophies.

Furthermore, there is little justification for hope that in Central and Southeastern Europe an independent al-

liance can be built of the countries "between" Russia and Germany. This "Third Europe" of whose arising some people have dreamed, has died before it came into being. Lithuania has become almost another protectorate of Hitlerism. Hungary has a frontier of twelve hundred miles in common with Germany, and is in conflict with Rumania concerning Transylvania. Rumania herself is in conflict not only with Hungary but also with Bulgaria, which is coveting the Rumanian Dobrudza. Yugoslavia is weakened by her Croatian conflict, and Poland has been more and more encircled by National Socialism in north and south.

HITLER'S AIMS

Hitler is at present the undisputed master of Central and Eastern Europe. His aims have been stated very frequently. There is no secrecy surrounding them. Nevertheless, there is, to an amazing extent, doubt about them. Some people think that Hitler will march east, others are convinced that his interests are confined mainly to the southeast, and a third group propagates the belief that he will turn west. Based upon National Socialist utterances, one can only come to the conclusion that his real aims can be found not only in one or another of these directions, but in all of them. It is—not from strategic but from political points of view—a minor question which step he will take first.

That Hitler aims at Russia has been made evident by his own book, by his actions, and also by one of his most influential advisers in matters of foreign policy, Alfred Rosenberg, who never tires of repeating that the Ukraine should be liberated from "Tartarian" influence. It seems that in the interest of clarification of public opinion it would be good to stop the never ending talk about lasting co-operation between Hitler and Stalin. Litvinoff called

Hitler's occupation of Czechoslovakia "arbitrary, violent, and aggressive." Russia knows too well what is going on in Lwów (Lemberg), the capital of the Polish Ukraine. Rather the other possibility should be considered that one day, with the active support of National Socialism and with or without the help of Japan, Russian Stalinism will be replaced by some kind of open Russian fascism. This would result in a united front of fascist powers, reaching from Japan, Manchukuo, and parts of China, over Russia, Germany, and Italy, down into the northern part of Africa and stretching out—at least ideologically—into parts of Central and South America.

As far as the southeast is concerned, National Socialism regards all countries along the Danube as lying within the natural and historic sphere of Germany's economic and political influence. It regards these countries as too weak to be really independent. It emphasizes that England and France have not the slightest right to exercise any influence in this zone.

As to the west, France and England, the two great European democracies, are, in the opinion of National Socialism, on a steady and inevitable decline, representing "rotten philosophies," and ripe to be replaced by the rising tide of fascist philosophies. Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Propaganda Minister, stated that one of the rare moments has come when the world is redistributed and empires are built. Of course, in the West as in the Near East, many events may be precipitated not only by Hitler himself but also by his co-operation with Mussolini, who has more than once referred to the Mediterranean as the *mare nostrum*.

Should not every German feel proud of the European hegemony thus achieved by Germany?

It cannot be denied that millions and

millions in Germany are most ardent, most convinced supporters of Hitler. Yet millions and millions of Germans feel very differently, as has been confirmed by all recent visitors to Germany and by most newspaper reports describing the silent reaction of the German masses on the occasion of Hitler's march into Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia. Instinctively these millions feel that Hitlerism is not good for the lasting interests of their country. No splendor of any European hegemony can fool them. They witnessed the downfall of the powerful Kaiserreich. They witnessed the rise and fall of the French hegemony established after the Great War. They do not believe in the value of any European hegemony of any country whatsoever. In their opinion too many different nations are living in Europe, and so the result of any hegemony, if not eliminated in time, could be but an always increasing nationalism and, in consequence of Hitler's political actions, especially an increased pan-Slavism, which inevitably would finally result in unrest and wars for years to come.

There is another, still deeper reason why millions in Germany refuse Hitlerism, feel ashamed of it, and look into the future with apprehension. They all were against the Treaty of Versailles with its broken promises and its betrayal of moral principles. They love their country as much as any other German. But they deny any value of exaggerated patriotism or self-adoring hypernationalism. The Germany represented by Hitlerism is not theirs; it can—they say—teach other countries how to run trains on time, how to organize armies and Storm Troops, how to change voluntary unity into enforced uniformity, how to adorn a town with flags, how to march, to sing, to hail, how to standardize the mind; but it cannot develop, strengthen, or defend, in any country

affected by its National Socialist hegemony, the principles of religious freedom, of internal freedom, of tolerance, of law, of free science, of personal dignity, or of anything else which represents the core of Christian and Western civilization.

INTERNATIONAL EFFECTS

Only if we dismiss the different brands of wishful thinking, if we fully understand the enormous range of the aims of National Socialist foreign policy, and if, furthermore, we keep in mind the still existing resistance of a large part of the German masses against Hitlerism, can we appreciate the repercussions on foreign countries which National Socialism produces or threatens to produce. Some of them are very visible; others are less visible or not yet visible.

Armament

To the visible group belongs armament. According to Professor Hans Simons, the military expenditures of the seven great powers rose from 1.5 billion dollars in 1904 to 2.4 billion dollars immediately before the World War, and are expected to rise during 1939 to 17.5 billion dollars. This is an increase of almost 1,200 per cent, or if consideration to price increases is given, of about 1,000 per cent. This armament race is primarily the result of Hitlerism. The money spent this way is not available to any productive work, unless war itself is interpreted as productive. The result can be but a lowering of the standard of living of the masses and the neglect of innumerable other governmental tasks throughout all countries concerned.

Refugees

Another repercussion of Hitlerism is the refugee problem. Never before has any migration of such actual and potential extent taken place. In the postwar

period, the largest refugee problem made its appearance as the result of the coming to power of Communism in Russia. It is most indicative that the coming to power of Hitlerism in Germany has had a similar result. Frequently the problem is considered as merely Jewish. This is not correct in view of the fact that in an ever increasing number, Protestants and Catholics, partly or wholly so-called Aryans, are among the refugees, including Protestant ministers and Catholic priests, monks, and nuns.

The fact that these emigrants are forced to leave the larger part of their savings behind them reveals that the principle of private property is involved. Under National Socialism the principle of private property is violated daily and hourly also with regard to Hitler's political opponents, while, at the same time, he claims to protect it. But a principle which is violated on Monday and praised on Tuesday, before being violated again the next day, can no longer be called a principle. It has deteriorated into a mere matter of political expediency.

The refugee problem constitutes also a clear violation of law. These refugees have not entered Germany illegally; they have been there for centuries. They are legally entitled to stay there—as well as Hitler and his cabinet members themselves. But where there is no national law and justice, there international law and justice cannot be upheld. Man remains the same outside the house as he is inside, in spite of all efforts toward different appearance.

Breakdown of international law

No statesman among the many who have contributed has done more for the destruction of international law than Hitler. He has done it especially by reintroducing admittedly the unholy principle of intervention and making the

widest use of it. Under the pretext of fighting Communism, he intervened in Spain and in Czechoslovakia, "the tool in the hands of Russia." Under the pretext of protecting German nationals, he intervened in Austria against the Schuschnigg government, and in Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia against the Hacha government. Under pretexts of this kind, one intervention will also in the future be followed by the next one, and no pledges of respecting other peoples' frontiers will be observed. The consequence of this policy is that at present international law is for all practical purposes dead as a doornail.

Hitlerite organizations

At the same time, and as another world-wide repercussion of National Socialism, Hitlerite or semi-Hitlerite organizations develop in all countries like mushrooms. Many of them represent Hitler's doctrines openly. Some of them, as for instance the German-American Bund, declare that they want to import at least most of these doctrines. If they can find allies among similar movements within their countries, they become the propaganda and information centers for their political partners.

As the power of these organizations increases or is believed to increase, another repercussion of National Socialism can be noticed. Controversies develop whether in view of the dangers of such "boring from within" the old principles of liberty of the press and freedom of assembly should be upheld without limitation. One asks whether it would not be better to surrender some internal liberties in order to preserve external liberty and national independence. Once these discussions have started, they do not soon come to an end. A new disuniting element has been added to already disunited forces.

Also the educational institutions are immediately affected by the problem.

It is true that at times, when the masses are cocksure, as in the prewar and the early postwar periods, it is the function of education to cause them to question. But now, many inquire fearfully whether at present, when the masses have already become uncertain and confused, one should not give them certainty by emphasizing again and again undisputable principles, rather than lead them into difficult controversies. Thus sacred principles of democratic education become endangered. A few months ago a large American educational convention assembled at Cleveland spent the major part of its sessions dealing with issues of this kind. Perhaps other controversies will follow concerning the question whether under the pressure of totalitarianism one might not have to postpone legislative actions, though much needed ones, if their introduction might contribute to an increase of the disuniting, disintegrating forces during a period of strain and tension in which some uniting influence could be more important than anything else.

The oldest democratic countries of Europe have already considerably restricted the freedom of the press. They enter into press conventions with National Socialism limiting international press campaigns, described as tantamount to intermeddling in other peoples' affairs, as vituperative and peace-disturbing, while at the same time the head of the National Socialist government is permitted to call, before the whole world, the head of the government of a neighboring country a plain liar, and to make known to the world that a British cabinet, in which Anthony Eden or Alfred Duff Cooper or Winston Churchill would have seats, would be regarded by him as composed of dangerous warmongers.

Totalitarian trade

Almost inconceivable in their far-

reaching consequences are the ways and means of National Socialist totalitarianism in the sphere of international trade. Up to now, Soviet Russia has been the only major world power having a totalitarian economic system; but she does not export large quantities of finished goods. The matter is becoming wholly different since highly industrialized countries, like National Socialist Germany, and also Italy and Japan, have become totalitarian and will use totalitarian principles also in the realm of international trade. The result will be that a British, French, or American General Electric Company or General Motors Corporation will have to compete not with the German, Italian, Japanese, or Russian General Electric or General Motors private organization, but with the Italian, Japanese, German, or Russian government, which for all practical purposes will decide upon prices, terms of deliveries, rebates, other special concessions, and so forth.

Does anyone really believe that free trade and totalitarian trade can coexist? Monarchies and republics, czarism and parliamentarism certainly could coexist, but their basic economic system was the same. The coexistence of free trade and totalitarian trade seems, however, to be absolutely impossible in the long run. Everywhere, throughout the whole world, signs already point in the direction of yielding to totalitarian economic tendencies and characteristics. Quite contrary to expectations nourished by some well-meaning capitalists and economists, National Socialism has not saved capitalism and private enterprise, but tends to their complete destruction, with very probable though not quite inevitable repercussions on the internal political structure of other countries also.

Political demoralization

Yet perhaps the most far-reaching

repercussion of National Socialism upon foreign countries is represented by the growing world-wide political demoralization. Were Bruening and Stresemann unsuccessful in their foreign policy? Bruening settled the very thorny reparation problem; Stresemann succeeded under most difficult conditions in having the French troops evacuate the Rhineland long before the evacuation was provided for by the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. Otherwise, Hitler would not have been able to march into the Rhineland. But this is the striking difference: Stresemann's and Bruening's policies were based upon the ideas and ideals of international law, of international co-operation, of building up a new Europe without any country's hegemony. They had not armed forces at their disposal; the moral justice of their demands bore them out. Hitler's successes are achieved primarily by the armed forces which he has brought into existence. No ideals, no morals, can justify his march into Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia. That nevertheless he could succeed in his undertakings seems in the opinion of large sections of the world to prove again that power and nothing but power will finally have to say the last word always and everywhere. Under such an impression all the lower instincts of our dualistic human nature are waking up and rising again.

Last but not least, are endangered the minds of all those millions of Germans of whom I spoke at the beginning and who are still opposed to Hitlerism, but who are doomed to lose their confidence and courage when they see how easily men beyond the German borders, even in old democratic countries, accept Hitlerite doctrines openly or secretly. Everywhere it seems to be accepted that in politics, if not in the life of the individual, ends justify means.

In reality, just the history of the last

twenty years could give us a very different lesson. After the Great War, England and France possessed all the power they possibly could obtain. Nevertheless, they lost out for the reason that in the last analysis their power achieved in consequence of the World War did not rest on moral grounds and was not used according to moral principles. The consequence was that a large part of the population of all countries, especially of England's own population, became doubtful in its conscience. Wilna, Annaberg, Manchukuo, and Ethiopia are, on a long road, only some of the milestones which indicate that even the most powerful countries have finally to pay for every neglect of political morality.

IMPORTANCE OF MORAL FORCES

I surely do not underestimate the importance of armies and navies, the importance of alliances, both political and military. Certainly France has a mighty army and England has a mighty fleet. But army, navy, and air corps combined have proved, it seems to me, to be of no avail if they are not directed by powerful spiritual forces. All this has long been recognized by the totalitarian governments to their very great profit; especially by Hitler himself, who never stops giving moral reasons of his kind. If in democratic countries some people speak about moral forces and necessities, they frequently are accused of getting into a missionary frame of mind or of stirring up hate. No hate against the population of any country can be of any avail. But as much as I believe that tolerance for the sinful individual is required by Christian as well as agnostic morals, as little do I believe that they ask for tolerance of intolerance, of injustice, of mental and physical, national and international, brutality. If the basic moral ideas of our civilization are successfully strengthened in every coun-

try where they still exist, they will be gradually restored in the countries where they are lost today, without any war. Otherwise they will be gradually but surely lost everywhere.

The influence of economic forces on political developments has long been overestimated; the influence of historical and national forces has long been underestimated; the influence of moral forces has often been completely overlooked. To restart estimating also the

tremendous import of the moral forces is much less a moralistic or "missionary" venture than it is—apart from Christian duty—a sign of political realism and, as I dare confess as my opinion, one of the most pressing tasks of political science. Above all, most strenuous efforts of this kind are needed if we want to stop the miserable decline of our whole civilization and eliminate forever both the spirit of Hitlerism and that of Versailles-ism.

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